

Remarks

This is in response to the final Office Action mailed on February 9, 2006. Claims 41-43 are amended. Claims 25, 26, and 41-43 remain pending. Reconsideration and allowance are requested for the following reasons.

Claim 41 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by Bernard, U.S. Patent No. 6,450,458. This rejection is respectfully traversed, and reconsideration is requested for the following reasons.

Claim 41 recites releasing the first spring portion to release the terminal end of the first trough member without releasing the second spring portion holding the terminal end of the second trough member.

The Office Action concedes that Bernard only discloses releasing both arms 310 of retention clip 300 by removing fastener 400. Office Action, p. 4, ll. 1 and 2. Bernard therefore fails to disclose or suggest releasing the first spring portion to release the terminal end of the first trough member without releasing the second spring portion holding the terminal end of the second trough member, as recited by claim 41. In other words, Bernard fails to disclose releasing one arm 310 to release the terminal end of one duct element 200 without releasing the other arm 310 that holds the terminal end of the other duct element 200. Reconsideration and allowance of claim 41 are requested.

Claims 42 and 43 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Cory, GB 1,342,085. This rejection is respectfully traversed, and reconsideration is requested for the following reasons.

Claim 42 recites a method including releasing a plurality of first locking elements on the coupler to release a plurality of first springs from a locking position to release the terminal end of the first trough member without releasing a plurality of second springs holding the terminal end of the second trough member.

Cory discloses that spring biased retaining members 12 on locating member 11 are used to join two pieces of channel-section trunking 10 as follows:

In order to join together two pieces of trunking 10, each retaining member 12 is located with the intermediate portion thereof in its associated aperture 14; one piece of trunking 10 is inserted between the adjacent ends of retaining members 12 and the wall of locating member 11 and pushed axially until the end of the trunking 10 abuts the portion 13; and then the other piece of trunking 10 is

inserted between the other ends of retaining members 12 and the wall of locating member 11 and is pushed axially until the end thereof abuts portion 13, so that the portion 13 forms stops for the ends of the pieces of trunking.

Cory, p. 2, ll. 87-101. Cory fails to disclose releasing trunking 10 from retaining members 12 of locating member 11. Cory therefore fails to suggest releasing a plurality of first locking elements on the coupler to release a plurality of first springs from a locking position to release the terminal end of the first trough member without releasing a plurality of second springs holding the terminal end of the second trough member, as recited by claim 42.

The Office Action characterizes Cory as follows:

Cory shows the coupler as piece 11 with springs 12 and locking elements 19 which is a raised portion that is released by pulling the raised portion 19 in a perpendicular direction away from hole 20 on trough member 10 in order to release the trough member 10 grip of the spring portions 12 on the trough members. And each trough member 10 on either side of the coupler 11 can be individually [removed] without removing the other.

Office Action, p. 4, ll. 12-18. It is unclear which portion of Cory is being referred to in this description from the Office Action. There is no disclosure in Cory suggesting that the springs can be released by pulling the raised portion 19 in a perpendicular direction away from hole 20. As noted above, Cory fails to disclose that spring biased retaining members 12 on locating member 11 can be released from trunking 10 at all, let alone in the manner suggested in the Office Action.

Reconsideration and allowance of claim 42, as well as claim 43 that depends therefrom, are therefore requested.

Claims 25 and 26 are allowed. Applicants appreciate the Examiner's assistance in identifying allowable subject matter. All claims are in condition for allowance.

Favorable reconsideration in the form of a Notice of Allowance is respectfully requested.
The Examiner is encouraged to contact the undersigned attorney with any questions regarding
this application.

Respectfully submitted,
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